ADMONITION and EXHORTATION

BY THE

Reverend Preſbytery of *EDINBURGH*

To all within their Bounds.

against the Edin. Theatre

At Edinburgh, *the fifth Day of* January, *One thouſand ſeven hundred and fifty-ſeven Years.*

THE Preſbytery taking into their ſerious Conſideration, the declining State of Religion, the open Profanation of the Lord's Day, the Contempt of public Worſhip, the growing Luxury and Levity of the preſent Age; in which ſo many ſeem Lovers of Pleaſure, more than Lovers of God: And being particularly affected with the UNPRECEDENTED COUNTENANCE given of late to the Playhouſe in this Place, when the State of the Nation, and the Circumſtances of the Poor, make ſuch hurtful Entertainments ſtill more pernicious; judged it their indiſpenſable Duty to expreſs, in the moſt open and ſolemn Manner, the deep Concern they feel on this Occaſion.

THE Opinion which the Chriſtian Church has always entertained of Stage Plays and Players, as prejudicial to the Intereſts of Religion and Morality, is well known; and the fatal Influence which they commonly have on the far greater Part of Mankind, particularly the younger Sort, is too obvious to be called in queſtion.

TO enumerate how many Servants, Apprentices, and Students in different Branches of Literature, in this City and Suburbs, have been ſeduced from their proper Buſineſs, by attending the Stage, would be a painful, diſagreeable Taſk.

THE Preſbytery, in the Year 1727, when conſiſting of many pious, prudent, and learned Miniſters, whoſe Praiſe is in all the Churches, being aware of theſe Evils, did prepare a Paper, which was read from the ſeveral Pulpits within their Bounds, warning their People againſt the dangerous Infection of the Theatre then erected here.

IN the Year 1737, the Legiſlature, in their great Wiſdom, did, by an Act of the 10th of *George* II. enact and declare; "That every Perſon who ſhould, for Hire or "Reward, act, or cauſe to be acted, any Play, or other Entertainment of the Stage, "without the ſpecial Licence and Authority mentioned in the ſaid Act, ſhould be "deemed a Rogue and a Vagabond, and for every ſuch Offence ſhould forfeit the "Sum of *L.* 50 *Sterling.*"

AT that Time a Project was ſet on Foot to obtain a licenſed Theatre in this City; but the Maſters and Profeſſors of the Univerſity, ſupported by the Magiſtrates, having prepared a Petition, ſetting forth the dangerous Tendency of a Playhouſe here, with reſpect to the important Intereſts of Virtue and Learning, the Project was laid aſide.

THE Players, however, being ſo audacious as to continue to act in defiance of the Law, the Preſbytery did, at their own Charge, proſecute them before the Court of Seſſion; and prevailed in the Proceſs. The Players were fined in terms of Law; and Warrants being iſſued for apprehending them, they fled from Juſtice. But others came in their place; who ſince that Time have attempted to elude the Law, by changing the Name of the PLAYHOUSE into that of the CONCERT-HALL.

As

As ſuch a ſlight Evaſion, the mere Change of a Name, could not make the ſmalleſt Variation in the Nature of the Thing, the Preſbytery continued to do all in their Power, and in their Sphere, to prevent the growing Evil; and think themſelves at this Time loudly called upon, in ONE BODY, and with ONE VOICE, to expoſtulate, in the Bowels of Love and Compaſſion, with all under their Care and Inſpection.

WHEN our gracious Sovereign, attentive to the Voice of Providence, is calling from the Throne to Humiliation and Prayer, how unſeemly is it for his Subjects to give themſelves up to Mirth and Jollity? When the War in which we are engaged, and many awful Tokens of the divine Diſpleaſure, beſpeak us, in the Language of an inſpired Writer, to *redeem the time becauſe the days are evil*, ſhould that Time be ſquandered away in running the conſtant Round of fooliſh, not to ſay ſinful Amuſements? When the Wants and Cries of the numerous Poor require extraordinary Supplies, how unaccountable is it to laviſh away vaſt Sums for ſuch vain and idle Purpoſes? When the Wiſdom of the Nation has guarded the Inhabitants of this City and Suburbs from the Infection of the Stage, by a plain and expreſs Statute; is it not a high Inſtance of Folly, to break down that Barrier, and open a Door with their own Hands for theatrical Repreſentations? which are in many Reſpects no leſs inconſiſtent with good Policy, than unfriendly to Religion; and will be found, ſooner or later, to affect their temporal as well as ſpiritual Intereſts.

ON theſe Accounts, and for many other obvious and weighty Conſiderations, the Preſbytery, warmed with juſt Concern for the Good of Souls, do, in the Fear of God, WARN, EXHORT, and OBTEST, all within their Bounds, as they regard the Glory of God, the Credit of our holy Religion, and their own Welfare, to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are called, by ſhewing a ſacred Regard to the Lord's Day, and all the Ordinances of divine Inſtitution; and by diſcouraging, in their reſpective Spheres, the illegal and dangerous Entertainments of the Stage.

THE Preſbytery would plead with ALL in Authority, with TEACHERS of Youth, PARENTS, and MASTERS of Families, to reſtrain, by every habile Method, ſuch as are under their Influence, from frequenting theſe Seminaries of Folly and Vice. They would particularly beſeech the younger Part of their Flock, to beware, leſt, by Example, or from a fooliſh Deſire of appearing in the faſhionable World, they be miſled into ſuch pernicious Snares; Snares which muſt neceſſarily retard, if not entirely mar that Progreſs in the reſpective Parts of their Education, on which their future Uſefulneſs and Succeſs depend. And, laſtly, they would intreat and obteſt Perſons of all Ranks and Conditions, that, inſtead of contributing to the growing Licentiouſneſs of the Age, they may diſtinguiſh themſelves by ſhining as Lights in the World, being blameleſs and harmleſs, the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Nation; OCCUPYING, for the great Purpoſes of the Honour of God and the Good of Mankind, that Time, that Subſtance, and thoſe other Talents which they have received from their Lord and Maſter.

ON the whole, The Preſbytery do, in the moſt earneſt Manner, call upon all who have the Intereſt of Religion at Heart, to plead fervently at the Throne of Grace, in the prevailing Name of the great Mediator, *until the ſpirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderneſs be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a foreſt: then judgment ſhall dwell in the wilderneſs, and righteouſneſs remain in the fruitful field; and the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.*

THE Preſbytery appoint this ADMONITION and EXHORTATION to be read from all the Pulpits within their Bounds, on the laſt Sabbath, being the thirtieth Day of this Month, immediately after divine Service before Noon.

Extracted from the Records of Preſbytery, by

JAMES CRAIG, *Preſb. Clerk.*

bTS 362.5.20